



NEWS RELEASE

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Montana Attorney Thelma Stiffarm to Head Office of Native American Affairs at SBA

WASHINGTON – Thelma Stiffarm, an accomplished lawyer with an extensive background in Native American affairs, has been appointed as assistant administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Native American Affairs, SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto announced today.

Stiffarm has more than 30 years experience working with Native American tribes throughout the country. She is a former small business owner of Thomas Management and Training, which specialized in providing legal seminars to tribal governments and federal agencies. Last year, Stiffarm taught Federal Indian Law at the Washington and Lee University School of Law.

"We are very fortunate to have Thelma Stiffarm on our team as an advocate for Native Americans across the country," Administrator Barreto said. "With her long history of dedication to the interests of the Native American community, I know she will bring a strong sense of purpose to the job."

Within the Office of Entrepreneurial Development, Stiffarm will direct and coordinate agency-wide programs to promote, expand and enhance small business opportunities and services for Native Americans, reservation-based Native Americans and tribal governments. Prior to her appointment, Stiffarm served as the program administrator of the Tribal Government Program in the Customer Liaison Office at the U.S. Census Bureau in Washington, D.C. She also served as liaison for the Census Bureau's American Indian and Alaska Native Advisory Committee.

Stiffarm, part Cree and Gros Ventre, is an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre Tribe of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana. She served one term on the Fort Belknap Tribal Council, and also served as the executive director of the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council in Billings, Montana. Stiffarm has also worked with the All Indian Pueblo Council, the American Indian Law Center, the United Tribes of North Dakota, and the Native American Rights Fund.

Stiffarm holds a bachelor of arts degree in secondary education from the University of Montana and a law degree from the University of New Mexico. She is married to Duane T. Bird Bear. The couple has two sons.

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at <http://www.sba.gov>.

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